The CIO's Balancing Act: New Global Study Reveals How Tech Leaders Manage Security Threats While Driving Innovation

April 8, 2025 at 10:01 AM EDT

MILWAUKEE, April 8, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- More than four out of ten (41%) Chief Information Officers (CIOs) report cybersecurity as their top concern, yet these same leaders are simultaneously increasing security budgets (77%), expanding cloud infrastructure (68%), and accelerating artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities (67%). According to the new ***Future Forward: CIO 2025 Outlook*** report released today by **Experis**, a global leader in IT workforce solutions and part of the **ManpowerGroup** (NYSE: MAN) family of brands, modern technology leaders are walking a tightrope between protecting their organizations and driving innovation in an era of relentless cyber threats and rapid digital transformation.

"Today's CIOs aren't just playing defense; they're strategically blending security and innovation to create competitive advantage," said Kye Mitchell, Head of Experis US. "The most successful technology leaders are embedding resilience into their digital foundations while simultaneously deploying AI, cloud, and other advanced technologies to outpace competitors. They aren't making tradeoffs; they're transforming their entire approach to technology by creating integrated strategies where digital defense enables rather than restricts progress."

Drawing from nearly 1,400 tech leaders across nine countries—including 480 C-suite executives and 913 senior IT decision-makers—the research paints a vivid picture of how smart leaders are weaving security into innovation strategies to outpace emerging threats.

Key Findings:

- **Cybersecurity threats keep 41% of CIOs up at night**, making it the top concern for tech leaders worldwide
- **77% of organizations plan to increase cybersecurity budgets** in 2025, followed by cloud infrastructure (68%) and AI (67%)
- **76% of IT employers worldwide report difficulty finding skilled tech talent**
- **52% of tech leaders are embedding AI skills into existing roles** rather than creating new positions
- **Relationship with the Chief Operating Officer (COO)** is identified as the most important C-suite partnership outside IT
- **56% of IT leaders say senior leadership lacks sufficient knowledge** about the CIO role and its responsibilities

Despite the buzz around artificial intelligence, the research reveals a measured approach to AI adoption among technology leaders. While CIOs value generative AI and are actively exploring its possibilities, they recognize the technology is still in its infancy. Just 37% see generative AI as a valuable solution for specific applications today, while 33% remain uncertain about its business impact. This cautious outlook doesn't mean inaction though as most organizations are either actively exploring (33%) or already implementing (27%) AI technologies in some capacity, indicating a pragmatic investment in its potential while acknowledging more development is needed.

"What stands out in our global research is the remarkable regional variation in how technology leaders approach these challenges," said James

Hallahan, Experis Europe Brand Leader. "In the Netherlands, tech leaders are pioneering sustainability initiatives with 67% reducing carbon footprints through technology, while maintaining robust security postures. At the same time, CIOs in Italy are among the most enthusiastic AI adopters, with 86% increasing cybersecurity investments simultaneously. Meanwhile, in France, 38% report that advocating for adequate budget resources is their greatest challenge, significantly higher than the global average of 25%. These distinct regional priorities highlight that there's no one-size-fits-all approach and successful tech leaders must adapt to local business needs rather than following a universal playbook."

The study also identifies five organizational maturity categories, with "Front Runners" (24%) distinguished by their customer-centric technology strategies and strong alignment with business objectives. In contrast, "Snoozers" (14%) show skepticism toward AI and cite internal resistance to change as a significant obstacle.

For the full report and actionable insights into how CIOs are navigating these challenges, visit: www.experis.com/cio-outlook

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